THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) During the visit of H.E. Hamid Karzai, Chairman of the Afghan Interim Administration to India on 26-27 February 2002, many areas were identified for bilateral cooperation, including proposals for assistance in the field of Agriculture. Through subsequent technical discussions, including during the visit of Afghan Minister of Agriculture Mr. Seyyed Hussein Anwari in April this year, steps have been taken to provide assistance, *inter alia,* through supply of seeds, equipment and training of personnel.

Indo-US talks regarding reconstruction work in Afghanistan

5322. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(d) whether India and the U.S. have held talks to coordinate reconstruction work in Afghanistan and enhance stability in that country;

(e) whether both the countries have agreed to train Afghanistan Military and police;

(f) the number of Indian personnel to be sent to impart training in Afghanistan; and

(a) the other details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (d) As part of our efforts to assist Afghanistan, India has actively participated in various international efforts aimed at reconstruction and rebuilding Afghanistan, India has also been in bilateral dialogue with several countries, including the US, that have interests in Afghanistan, to discuss aspects relating to institution building of the Afghan Interim Administration in various fields, including in the field of Defence.

America's reported statement to use nuclear weapons

5323. DR. KARAN SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news report published in the Indian Express dated March 13, 2002, captioned "N-report casts PALL on US-Russia ties"; and

(b) if so, the Government's response to the reported irritant presented by the recent US Department's policy review, outlining a contingency plan of the US to use nuclear weapons against at least seven countries including Russia, in the context of global peace scenario?

THE MINISTER OF STATE If* THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Government has seen report* in the US newspapers and subsequent commentaries on the subject including in the Indian print media. Official statements by the US Government have described the latest US Nuclear Posture Review at "not an operational planning document".

(b) As part of its long-standing policy, India continues to seek systematic restraints on use of nuclear weapons through a range of well considered steps.

Diplomatic efforts to defuse war-like situation between Israel and Palestine

5324. PROF. M. SANKARAUNGAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(b) whether Government have taken any diplomatic efforts to help defusing war-like situation between Israel and Palestine;

(c) if so, whether it has helped to defuse the problems; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) Government remain concerned at the on-going cycle of violence & terror in West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem and Israel. Government are in touch with the countries in the region on these developments. Government have stressed that there is no alternative to peace and a solution has to come through negotiations.

When President Yasir Arafat had been under siege of the Israeli Defence Forces in the Presidential compound at RamaHah, Minister of External Affairs had spoken to Mr. Shimon Peres, Deputy Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of Israel and had advised him that such action will not help.the cause of peace. We are happy to note that as a result of the pressure exerted by the international community, including India, the